



The Business of Death: Proving the Worth of a Funeral Home in a Changing Marketplace

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What Do Funeral Homes Do?

Arrange funerals and services

Meet with families to discuss needs

Prepare bodies for burial

Sell caskets, urns and other funeral products

Facilitate graveside services

Write up and place obituaries

Transport the deceased

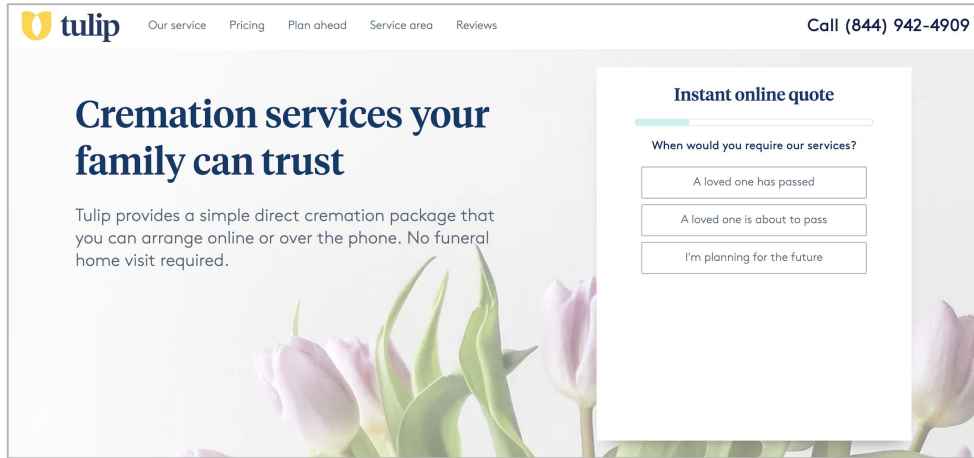
Connect families with resources

Pre-plan funerals

File death certificates



Situation Analysis



Funeral homes have seen steady growth in the past 5 years, but growth has also been limited by the increase in demand for low-cost cremation services (McGinley, 2019).

While cremation was already becoming popular, the recession of 2008 created an increased desire for cremation because of the affordability it offered consumers (Beard & Burger, 2017). Since then, companies have popped up everywhere to provide a quick, convenient way to have a loved one cremated (McGinley, 2018).

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Social	Technological
<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Increasing desire for “celebrations of life” (Gadberry, 2000).-As baby boomers age, the number of deaths will increase and will soon account for nearly three-quarters of US deaths (McGinley, 2018).-Less association with religion (McGinley, 2019).-Era of customization (Beard & Burger, 2017).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Internet has allowed funeral homes more ways of educating families through websites, blogs and social media (Beard & Burger, 2017). <p>The internet has allowed consumers to order caskets, urns and other funeral products directly online (McGinley, 2019)</p>

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Economic	Environmental
<p>-When the economy is good, people are more willing to purchase traditional items like urns and caskets (McGinley, 2019).</p> <p>-When economy is bad, consumers will cut out traditional funeral expenses to save money (McGinley, 2019)</p>	<p>-Popularity of green funerals and burials on the rise (Beard & Burger, 2017).</p> <p>-Requirements for environmental health and safety (McGinley, 2019).</p>

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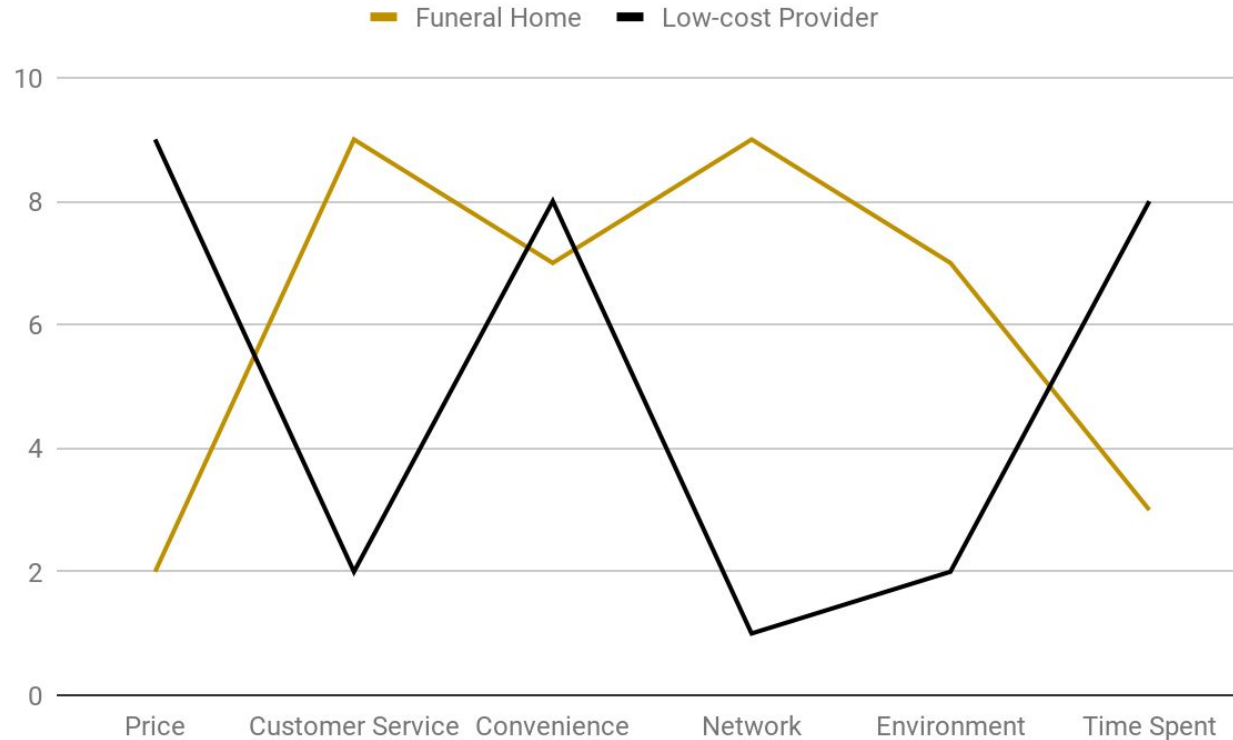
Political	Legal	Ethical
<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Funeral director licensing rules determined by individual states (McGinley, 2019).-Government regulations have leaned more favorably toward low-cost providers in recent years. For example, Minnesota funeral operators with multiple branches are not required to have a preparation room at each. (Amendment to Sec. 23. Minnesota Statutes 2015 Supplement, section 149A.92, subdivision 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Regulations for environmental health and safety (McGinley, 2019). Required to provide itemized cost list to families (Fan & Zick, 2004)Without regulations, providers with minimal training and facilities could sell cremation services to consumers (Harrington & Krynski, 2002).-Licenses required for funeral directors works to funeral home advantage (McGinley, 2019).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Advantage of legitimacy over unknown ecommerce options (McGinley, 2019).-Longevity of funeral homes in the community (McGinley, 2019)-Minimal room for unethical behavior in the funeral industry in general - would be bad for public relations (Glidden, 1963).

Problem



A desire for cost and convenience is diminishing consumer perception of the value provided by full service funeral homes in a world of low-cost cremation providers

Competitive Analysis



Key Strengths:
Customer Service
Network
Environment

Funeral Home Value Proposition

Target	55+ service appreciators
Desired Action	Choose full-service funeral home for end-of-life services for a loved one
Best Alternative	Low-cost cremation
Benefit Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Network of vendors-Customer service from funeral directors-Everything handled for you
Trade Offs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-More expensive-Time commitment
Price vs Alternatives	Much higher than low-cost providers

Research - Interviews

Crematory Owner + Operator

Questions about trends, funeral homes vs low-cost

Funeral Directors

Questions about industry trends, serving families, competition

Consumer who chose a low-cost provider

Questions about process, decisions, choice

Consumer who chose a funeral home

Questions about decision making, choice, impressions

Research Takeaways

Funeral Directors will do **just about anything** for the families they serve

People choose low-cost providers primarily because of **cost**.

Main reason for choosing a funeral home is because of **service and trust**

Although the cost is higher for funeral homes, the **convenience** will ultimately be realized through the planning and preparation process



Communications Plan



Objective

Increase prearranged funerals 15% among target audience after one year


How?

1. Target audiences that are the most likely to utilize a funeral home
2. Use messaging to place emphasis on service
3. Reach audiences through the channels they use

Communications Strategy

A decorative L-shaped line in a light brown color, consisting of a horizontal segment at the top and a vertical segment on the right side.

Portray funeral homes as **service providers** and acknowledge the limited service low-cost cremation providers can offer

A decorative L-shaped line in a light brown color, consisting of a vertical segment on the left and a horizontal segment at the bottom.

Positioning Statement



For those who appreciate service, it's the trusted partner that will provide peace of mind during times of grief

Target Audience

55+ SERVICE APPRECIATORS



Segments

55+ SERVICE APPRECIATORS

	Planning Pros	Community Loyalists	Religious Affiliators
Message theme	Service through taking care of coordination and details	Service through community connection	Service through respecting tradition
% of market	35% of market	25% of market	40% of market
Where to reach them	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Email lists• Places of worship• Search• Will and trust attorneys	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community events• Local bars, restaurants• Schools and parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Places of worship• Email lists• Facebook
What they want	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Peace of mind• Things done their way• Assurance that their wishes are carried out	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To gather in their community• Someone they know and trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• People that know their traditions• Someone that can work with their church or place of worship

The Big Idea



YOU WON'T GET THAT FROM THEM

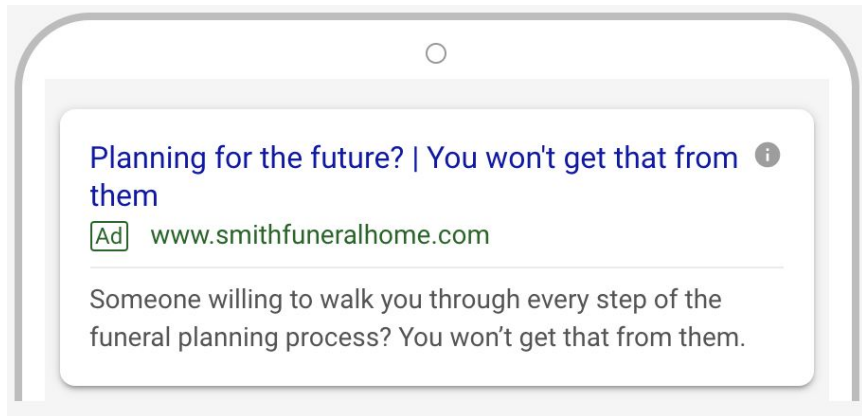
Messaging

	Messages
Planning Pros	<p>A list of caterers and reputable musicians? You won't get that from them.</p> <p>A person willing to walk you through every step of the process at anytime? You won't get that from them.</p>
Community Loyalists	<p>Working with someone you've seen at the ballpark down the street? You won't get that from them.</p> <p>A place you can gather amongst people from your community? You won't get that from them.</p>
Religious Affiliators	<p>A person who respects your desire for a thoughtful and meaningful ceremony? You won't get that from them.</p> <p>An understanding of what traditions are important to you? You won't get that from them.</p>

Tactics

	Tactics
Planning Pros	Partnership with will and trust attorneys [BUZZ] Paid search strategy [AWARENESS] Direct Mail [AWARENESS]
Community Loyalists	Sponsorship at community locations (ex: baseball field or park) [LOYALTY] Billboards in the community [AWARENESS] Host events (ex: pancake breakfast, valentine's dinner) [EXPERIENCE]
Religious Affiliators	Facebook ads [AWARENESS] Church bulletin advertisements [AWARENESS] Direct Mail [AWARENESS]

Creative



Paid Search Ad

Billboard



Creative

Facebook Ad



Working with someone you've seen at the ballpark down the street? You won't get that from them

Ratcliff Family Funeral Home

Baseball park sponsorship



Johnson Family Funeral Home

Sponsored · 🌐

A person who respects your desire for a thoughtful and meaningful ceremony? You won't get that from them.



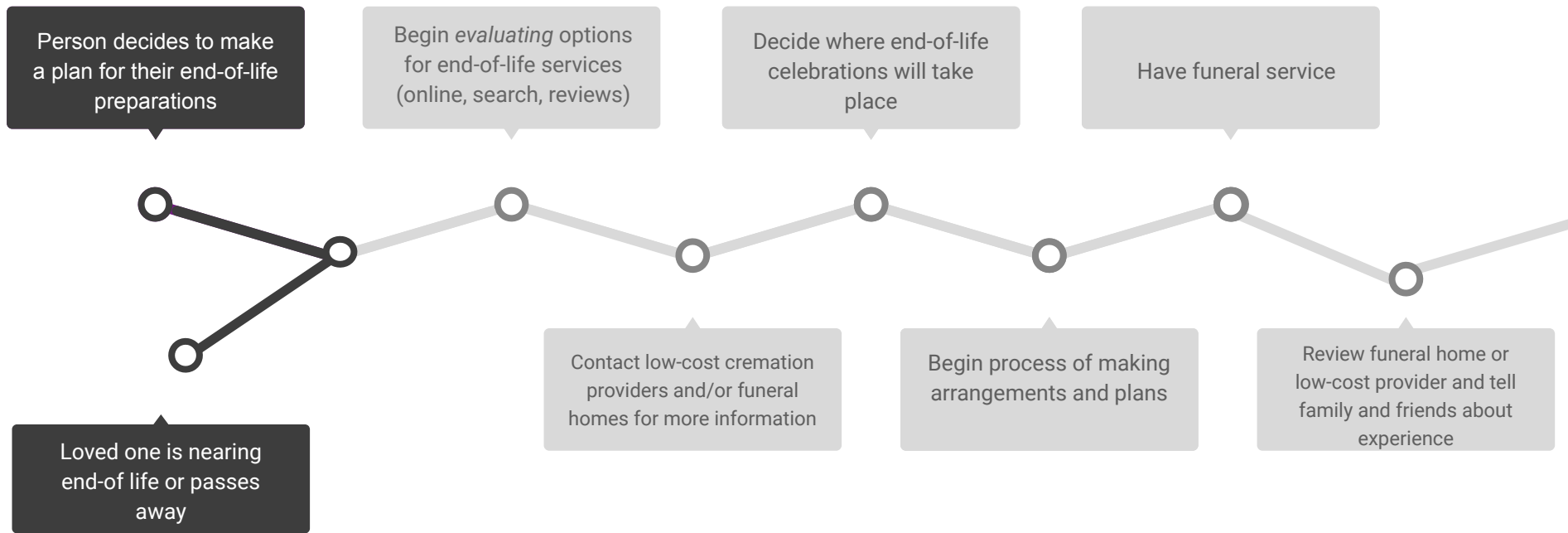
JOHNSONFAMILYFH.COM

Meet with Us Today

We respect tradition. We understand what is important to...

[Learn More](#)

Consumer Journey



Focus efforts on the discovery phase —————>

Discovery

Action

Community

Timing

[illegible]

Budget - 1 Year

Paid Search	\$5,475
Sponsorship	\$4,500
Church bulletin ads	\$1,750
Events	\$3,050
Direct Mail	\$2,000
Facebook Ads	\$1,225
Billboards	\$5,600
Total	\$23,600

Evaluation

- Track prearrangements
 - Internal tracking
- Event Attendance
 - Internal tracking
- Click-throughs on Facebook ads
 - Facebook advertising platform
- Click-throughs on paid search ads
 - Google Ads platform
- How did you hear about us?
 - Survey to capture where people found out about the funeral home
- Number of referrals from partner will and trust attorneys
 - Via survey

Key Takeaways

1. Funeral homes should focus their **messaging on the service** they provide
2. Consumers don't always understand all the things funeral homes do - must **explicitly state the benefits of using a funeral home**
3. Consumers don't necessarily want to think about funerals - find consumers where they are to **keep awareness up**
4. Ensure communications efforts are found in the **discovery phase** of the consumer journey